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# Conceptualizing the Place of Deaf People in Ancient Israel: Suggestions from Deaf Space

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Building on the recent interest in disability studies within biblical studies, this article considers the place of the deaf in ancient Israel. Positive explorations of disability by Neil Walls, Saul Olyan, and Hector Avalos have moved away from the assumption that a deaf life in the ancient world was necessarily a squalid one. Using the insights into the complexities of deaf experience put forward by the Rev. J. H. Pettingell, a nineteenth-century clergyman who worked with what were then termed the “deaf and dumb,” this article explores the different potential scenarios for a male and a female deaf person. It then considers the potential life options for a priestly son deafened early or born deaf. The conclusion notes the possibility of communal Deaf spaces in ancient Israel and calls for an acceptance of one of the central methodological assumptions of deaf studies, that where a group of deaf people come together, a signing community is likely to come into existence.

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The last twenty years have witnessed an increasing focus on the concept of “disability” and the role of the “disabled” in the ancient Near East.<sup>1</sup> In this essay,

We would like to record our thanks to Jon Morgan, Dai O’Brien, Deane Galbraith, and John Walker; to Laura Zucconi and those attending the Healthcare and Disability in the Ancient World seminar at the Society of Biblical Literature International/European Association of Biblical Studies meeting in Vienna in July 2014; and to the participants in the Bible, Critical Theory and Reception seminar held in Bristol in September 2014, for their constructive comments. Special thanks go to Fiona C. Black for her invaluable late input.

<sup>1</sup>In the introduction to their 2007 edited volume *This Able Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper point to two significant

we wish to add to the ongoing impact of those discussions and publications. We ask a fundamental question about how scholarship should best conceptualize deafness and muteness in the ancient world—and in Israel in particular—if we wish to understand fully the sparse references to them in our textual sources and the richer social reality to which these references so fleetingly point. In light of the concept of Deaf space as it has been developed and discussed in disciplines such as anthropology, deaf studies, and geography, an urgent reconsideration is required of the scholarly assumptions that have so far undergirded work on this topic. We begin by briefly outlining three recent scholarly works in biblical studies. We then introduce specific insights about the multiple realities of deafness/muteness and the historical implications of the complexities involved by drawing from an ongoing study on St Saviour's Church for the Deaf and Dumb, Oxford Street, in Victorian London in which we are currently engaged.<sup>2</sup> In the remainder of the essay, we consider what might be inferred about deaf experience both of everyday life and of priestly service and conclude with some thoughts on the significance of our choice of theoretical underpinning for future investigation of the Deaf spaces of ancient Israel.<sup>3</sup>

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dates in the history of the academic study of the phenomenon of disability: the first was November 1995, with the first meeting of the Religion and Disability Consultation at the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, focused on "People with Disabilities and Religious Constructions of Theodicy and Tragedy," and the second was the first session of the Biblical Scholarship and Disabilities Consultation at the same meeting in San Antonio in November 2004, focused on "The Blind, the Deaf, and the Lame: Biblical Representation of Disability"; this consultation met at both the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting and the SBL International meeting. See Avalos, Melcher, and Schipper, "Introduction," in *This Able Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*, ed. Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper, SemeiaSt 55 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 1–9, here 2–3. In more recent years, we can add seminars on Disability Studies and Healthcare in the Bible and Near East at the Annual Meeting (since 2007) and on Healthcare and Disability in the Ancient World at the International Meeting (since 2011). With an increasing flow of publications from those involved in and encouraged by these various sessions, it appears that disability studies is finally beginning to make its mark on studies of the ancient world.

<sup>2</sup>The study referred to is a three-year project funded by Leverhulme Trust entitled "Scripture, Dissent and Deaf Space: St Saviour's, Oxford Street," running from February 2014 to January 2017. Using the example of St Saviour's Church for the Deaf and Dumb, Oxford Street, London (1873–1923), we hope to challenge simplistic portrayals of the relationship between deaf people and the hearing English churches, interrogating the construction of textual and taught knowledge about deaf persons' place within both established and dissenting churches and the scriptural and traditional origins of this social location and the Deaf spaces that were produced in response. It is the implicit comparison of these Victorian Deaf spaces with those of ancient Israel that has arisen as the study has progressed that has resulted in this essay. We would like to record our thanks to the Leverhulme Trust for their support for the project.

<sup>3</sup>A variety of terms have been used to refer to those who are unable to hear and so, by consequence, are unable to acquire speech; "deaf and dumb" was dominant in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and was only imperfectly replaced by a later nineteenth-century use of "deaf mute." More recently, the capitalized term *Deaf* has been adopted by those deaf people

# I. WALLS, OLYAN, AND AVALOS ON DISABILITY AND THE ANCIENT WORLD

Three recent short pieces by Neal H. Walls, Saul Olyan, and Hector Avalos, are of interest.

First, Walls's essay on the disabled body in ancient Mesopotamia uses the myth of Enki and Ninmah to suggest that a widespread "social ideology of inclusion for people of differing abilities" existed in that region. In that story, Ninmah creates a series of men—"weak handed," "blind," "with paralyzed feet" (or, in a variant, an "idiot"), and "incontinent"—and each is assigned a place in life as, respectively, "a servant to the king," as "a court servant," as "a silversmith," with the last one's role being left unclear.<sup>4</sup> Stigma, if it existed, did not preclude such persons from "being assigned jobs as they were able" or being "cared for at home over long periods of time."<sup>5</sup> Walls's positive emphasis on the social reality behind the texts and the existence of "disability" spaces in that culture helps to problematize the assumption of such scholars as William G. Dever that the lives of those considered disabled in earlier periods were brutal and short, an assumption that, we would argue, is an unfortunate legacy of certain attitudes toward historical disability that were common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup>

Second, Olyan's chapter on "deafness"/"muteness" terminology in the few biblical texts in which it appears either "literally" (Exod 4:11, Lev 19:14, Ps 38:14–15, Prov 31:8) or "metaphorically" (Isa 6:9–10, 29:18–19, 35:5–6, 42:18–19, 43:8, 56:10, Jer 5:21, 10:5, Pss 115:5–8, 137:5–6) in his book *Disability in the Hebrew Bible* shows that "deafness" and "dumbness" were not categorized as defects (מומים), as blindness and lameness were; the list of defects also included improperly healed or uneven limbs, a hunched back, visible eye damage, some skin conditions, and genital damage (see primarily Lev 21:17–23, 24:19–20, and Deut 23:2

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who identify as part of a signing, linguistic, and cultural minority. Our use of terms is reflective of the contemporary context, and we return to the discussion of the types and nature of deafness and of d/Deaf people's experience below.

<sup>4</sup>Neal H. Walls, "The Origins of the Disabled Body: Disability in Ancient Mesopotamia," in Avalos, Melcher, and Schipper, *This Abled Body*, 13–30, here 17–18.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>6</sup>Dever posits that, as the result of "the inherent insularity and conservatism of rural folk everywhere" (except in Walls's ancient Mesopotamia perhaps), the "physically handicapped" in Israelite villages were linked with "the village idiot, the leper, the homosexual, even the boy or girl who never married" and regarded "with suspicion or even as outcasts: 'accursed ones'" (*The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: Where Archaeology and the Bible Intersect* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 204). Compare this with the words of John H. Pettingell in 1881: "It was customary, as it is now in less enlightened countries, to regard deaf-mutes as imbeciles, and to treat them with neglect" ("What the Bible Says of the Deaf and Dumb," *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* 26 [1881]: 226–38, here 238).

[Eng. 23:1]). This difference between deafness/dumbness and blindness/lameness occurs, Olyan notes, despite all four conditions being physical in nature and characterized by what he calls “somatic dysfunction.”<sup>7</sup> (Tempting as it is to assume that visibility of the condition was definitive here, the inclusion of damaged testicles in the category of defects might suggest that things were perhaps not so simple.) Olyan notes that, in contrast to the מומים, the deaf and the dumb were

subject to no evident restrictions on their access to cultic space and activities in biblical texts. No laws are attested in the biblical anthology that limit the cultic responsibilities of deaf or mute priests (cf. Lev 21:17–23), nor do any biblical texts bear witness to any ban on the entry of deaf or mute persons into the sanctuary (cf. Deut 23:2 [Eng. 1]; 2 Sam 5:8b).<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, he cautions against overplaying any advantage that they might have received as a result. Deafness and muteness were often linked with the conditions characterized as defects (Exod 4:11, Lev 19:14, Isa 29:18–19, 35:5–6, 42:18–19, 43:8, Jer 5:21) or were given negative connotations such as failure, inadequacy, or ignorance (Isa 6:9–10, 56:10). Deafness and muteness could also be the negative outcome of a curse (muteness in Ps 137:5–6; deafness in “non-Israelite West Asian sources”).<sup>9</sup> Olyan concludes that a “second, unnamed native classification” existed that included all of these conditions and had its “basis in the notion of a shared weakness, vulnerability, and dependence” (see esp. Isa 28:18–19, Ps 38:14–15), the term for which is now lost.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Avalos’s essay on sensory criticism calls for an investigation of the senses in biblical texts. He focuses on the Deuteronomistic History (with Jeremiah) and Job and examines how each values the senses differently, “especially in receiving information about the world and about God’s will”; the former is “audiocentric” and the latter is “visiocentric.”<sup>11</sup> From the Deuteronomistic History, Avalos offers examples that presume the superiority of hearing over sight. These include the Shema—“Hear, O Israel . . .” (Deut 6:4–5)—and the repeated drawing of wrong conclusions based on the “mere use of sight,” exemplified by Eli’s failure to recognize visually either the “pious worship” of Hannah (1 Sam 1:12–13) or the “impious worship” of his sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam 2:22). For Avalos, the doomed choice of Saul as king because of his appearance (1 Sam 10:17–24) is a critique of visiocentricity, and Elijah’s hearing of the deity in the “still small voice” rather than in the “dramatic audiovisual theophanies” of wind, earthquake, or fire

<sup>7</sup> Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 47.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 48–53.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 61; cf. 49–50.

<sup>11</sup> Hector Avalos, “Introducing Sensory Criticism in Biblical Studies: Audiocentricity and Visiocentricity,” in Avalos, Melcher, and Schipper, *This Abled Body*, 47–59, here 50.

(1 Kgs 19) is an endorsement of audiocentricity.<sup>12</sup> This sensory bias Avalos attributes to Israelite concerns about the visual nature of idol worship and the “lack of sense” exhibited by these gods made by human hands.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, Avalos’s discussion of Job begins with the rather different hierarchy of Job 42:5—“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you”—and develops from there.<sup>14</sup> The categories of deafness and muteness do not appear in the essay, but the implication of Avalos’s argument is that such people would have been disadvantaged in the culture that created the Deuteronomistic History, not least in terms of their knowledge of God.<sup>15</sup>

## II. LOOKING THROUGH A NINETEENTH-CENTURY LENS

Interest in deafness and muteness in ancient Israel has been evidenced especially among those who were either deaf and/or mute or those who worked with them. Indeed, from the eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century, it was common for writings pertaining to the educational or moral status of the deaf and mute to situate modern commentary against a more or less detailed account of ancient attitudes toward deaf people and their sign language.<sup>16</sup> Occasionally authors focused more explicitly on the Bible, however, specifically exploring the experiences of those whose lives are reflected in the few biblical texts that mention deafness and muteness. One such study, by the Rev. John H. Pettingell (1815–1887), is entitled “What the Bible Says of the Deaf and Dumb.” The study was published in the journal *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* in 1881.<sup>17</sup> The

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 51–53.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 54–55. Such sensory favoritism meant that Israel’s texts could also be rendered problematic. Avalos notes the deity’s words in Jer 8:8—“How can you say, ‘We are wise, / and the law of the LORD is with us,’ / when, in fact, the false pen of the scribes / has made it into a lie?”—and in Jer 31:33, where it is said that the day is coming when the law will be written invisibly upon the heart, rather than visibly upon the scroll (55).

<sup>14</sup>On senses and divine communication in the Psalms and Isaiah, see Rebecca Raphael’s literary study *Biblical Corpora: Representations of Disability in Hebrew Biblical Literature*, LHBOTS 445 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 109–28. Biblical texts are quoted according to the NRSV.

<sup>15</sup>What lies behind Avalos’s texts is left largely unspecified. We intend to follow a similar approach. We are well aware that readers will have varied and sophisticated views on the historical settings of and the relationships between texts such as Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History, and Leviticus. We do not wish to make acceptance of any particular reconstruction a precondition for engaging with the central argument we are making. It is our hope that the argument can find a home within any critical reconstruction of ancient Israel.

<sup>16</sup>These studies were relatively standard, containing references to Greek, Hebrew, and often “barbarian” nations and were often designed to show the contrast with the author’s more enlightened approach (e.g., Ferdinand Berthier, *Histoire et statistique de l’éducation des sourds-muets* [Paris: Published by the author, 1836]).

<sup>17</sup>See n. 6 above. Pettingell, a Congregationalist minister, worked as a pastor in a number

existence of formal sign languages in the nineteenth century means some parallels are inappropriate, but much remains instructive.

The Old Testament is discussed only in the opening three pages of Pettingell's article, which is devoted primarily to the New Testament. He begins, however, not by discussing texts but by asking who can be considered "deaf and dumb." Those who have aphasia or simple dumbness caused by problems with the organs of speech or with the mind—"speech organ" link are not to be counted as deaf and dumb, Pettingell states. Nor should one who becomes deaf late in life be termed a "deaf-mute." Children who lose their hearing after they have acquired speech but who retain their vocal skills are not deaf-mutes either; these he terms "semi-mutes." The developing complexity of the terminology is well illustrated by the first American deaf-mute minister, Rev. Henry Winter Syle, who was ordained in 1876 and was described that day by Rev. William Bacon Stevens as one who "had the use of the organs of hearing until at 6 years of age, [when] disease deprived him of hearing, and the loss of voice gradually followed."<sup>18</sup> Had Syle retained his speech, as some did, he would not have been a "deaf-mute" and would in consequence have had a radically different experience of the world. Using census data, Pettingell then estimated the numbers of "deaf- and semi-mutes" in his day as ranging from one in 2000 in the United States to one in 150 in the alpine regions of Europe.

When he turns to the Old Testament, Pettingell lists six texts pertinent to the subject (omitting a few that he thinks are "evidently metaphorical"), all of which appear among the larger number included in Olyan's discussion of deafness/muteness. Here are his texts quoted in full:

Ex. iv, 11 [4:11]. "Who maketh man's mouth? or who maketh the *dumb*, or *deaf* [חרש] or the seeing, or the blind?"

Levit. xix, 14 [19:14]. "Thou shall not curse the *deaf* [חרש], nor put a stumbling-block before the *blind*."

Ps. xxxviii, 13. [38:13]. "But, I, as a *deaf* man [בחרש], heard not, and I was as a *dumb* man that openeth not his mouth."

Is. xxix, 18. [29:18]. "And in that day shall the *deaf* [החרשים] hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the *blind* shall see, out of obscurity and out of darkness."

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of the eastern states of the United States, before spending five years in Antwerp working for the American Seamen's Friend Society. He eventually became a teacher in the New York Institute for the Deaf and Dumb before resigning and taking a position in the Pennsylvania Institute for the Deaf and Dumb. He published numerous articles in the *American Annals* relating to deaf people and, in 1881, authored a 276-page book entitled *Biblical Terminology Relative to the Future Life* (Philadelphia: Bible Banner Association).

<sup>18</sup>William Bacon Stevens, *A Sermon Preached in St Stephen's Church, Philadelphia, Sunday, October 8, 1876 on Occasion of the Ordination of Henry Winter Syle (A Deaf Mute) as Deacon in the Protestant Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: McCalla & Stavely, 1876), 24.



Is. xxxv, 5, 6. [35:5–6]. “Then shall the eyes of the *blind* be opened, and the ears of the *deaf* shall be unstopped [וְאָזְנֵי חֲרָשִׁים תִּפְתָּחנָה] then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the *dumb* sing.”

Is. xliii, 8. [43:8]. “Bring forth the *blind* people that have eyes, and the *deaf* [הַחֲרָשִׁים] that have ears.” (Evidently figurative.)<sup>19</sup>

Pettingell draws the following conclusion from these texts:

No mention whatever ... is made of the deaf and dumb, or of deaf-dumbness. Two or three allusions are made to deafness, or to those who are deaf, and about as many to those who are dumb; but nothing is said of the double infirmity of deaf-dumbness, which is so common with us at the present day....

It may be said that deafness and dumbness may be supposed to belong to the same individual: anything may be *supposed*. All these afflictions may be supposed to belong to one and the same person, as sometimes occurs; but no hint is given in the text that this is the case. Indeed these afflicted persons are spoken of as constituting distinct and separate classes.<sup>20</sup>

That members of the category that Pettingell described as “afflicted” with “deaf-dumbness” are not explicitly described in the biblical texts does not mean that he believed that none such existed in ancient Israel. His numbers for such people in various geographical locations, outlined only a few lines earlier, strongly imply that “deaf-mute” and “semi-mute” Israelites *must* have existed.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the existence of cousin marriage in Israel, viewed by many in the nineteenth century as the major contributor to pockets of congenital deafness, would also have been suggestive to him of the presence of “deaf-mutes” in Israel.<sup>22</sup> They may even be

<sup>19</sup> Pettingell, “What the Bible Says,” 228 (his emphasis).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 227, 228 (his emphasis).

<sup>21</sup> Not all in this era would have drawn such an implication from the figures. In a discussion in 1877 about the statistical evidence for the significance of consanguineous marriages, Désiré de Haerne offers the following negative opinion on the existence of “deaf-mutism” in ancient Israel: “Now, as to the ancient patriarchs, they certainly belonged to a very robust race, as is proved by the high age they attained; which fact I consider as having been providentially arranged for the propagation and maintenance of the faith among the people of God. This extraordinary strength of the primitive Hebrew race explains sufficiently, I think, the absence of deaf-mutism among them; and it is moreover to be observed that this infirmity is very seldom mentioned in the Old Testament in general, and, consequently, perhaps not in cases of the marriage of near kin” (“Consanguineous Marriages as a Cause of Deaf-Mutism,” *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* 22 [1877]: 146–57, here 148).

<sup>22</sup> E.g., Alfred Henry Huth, “Consanguineous Marriages,” *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* 23 [1878]: 144–50. This position was often expressed in contrast to, or in outright opposition to, the belief of such figures as Alexander Graham Bell that a congenitally deaf man marrying a congenitally deaf woman risked breeding a deaf form of humanity (e.g., Alexander Graham Bell, *Memoir upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race* [Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1878]; Bell, *Marriage: An Address to the Deaf*, 3rd ed. [Washington, DC: Volta Bureau, 1898]). James Hawkins notes that nineteenth-century arguments against cousin

“supposed” by an interpreter—subverting Pettingell’s own words—to lie behind one or more of the texts just discussed, but Pettingell is very clear that the texts do not say so explicitly.

Pettingell offers a pertinent point when he employs his experience of the varied concrete realities of deafness, dumbness, and deaf-dumbness of his own day to challenge the assumption that a single condition lies behind our texts. In order to press home that point, we will offer a brief categorization of the multiple experiential realities of deafness that might have existed in a society such as ancient Israel. (Any form of “muteness” that is unrelated to hearing loss will not be considered further.)

### III. CATEGORIZING THE MULTIPLE EXPERIENCED REALITIES OF DEAFNESS

Pettingell’s triad of “deaf-mute” (= deaf from birth, or deaf from infancy, without speech), “semi-mute” (= deaf from infancy, with retained speech), and “deafness” (= postinfancy or late onset) can be significantly enriched by examining these realities under three headings: timing, cause, and experience.

There is a vast gulf in life experience between those born deaf or made deaf as prelingual infants and those who have lost their hearing after having mastered a spoken language, whether language is eventually retained in oral or in written form—or perhaps in both or even neither, in the latter case being available only in internal thought processes. The intellectual development and communication skills of those born deaf would have been affected, perhaps severely, in an ancient setting without a formal sign language, whereas some of those who had mastered a language before losing their hearing might have experienced comparatively little change to their lives and prospects. The role of the social and cultural setting on an individual’s experience of deafness should not be underestimated and would have led to a further diversification of life possibilities for the categories of deafness mentioned here. We should note the obvious point that babies born deaf in the ancient world would not have been systematically recognized as such, their deafness becoming clear in many cases only with their failure to acquire language as a two- to three-year-old. A baby with deaf siblings or visible genetic problems might have been recognized as deaf significantly earlier, however.

Both infants and adults could be made deaf at any time through various events; in ancient Israel illness and physical trauma would be the most likely

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marriage among the congenitally deaf were hindered by appeals to “the Scriptures, and the case of Zelophehad’s daughters, who ‘were married unto their father’s brothers’ sons” (*The Physical, Moral and Intellectual Constitution of the Deaf and Dumb: With Some Practical and General Remarks Concerning Their Education* [London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1863], v).

causes. Damaging chemicals and deafening noises—common causes of deafness in industrialized societies—were less prevalent or wholly absent in preindustrial agrarian societies such as ancient Israel. Nevertheless, proximity to extreme natural phenomena like thunder (1 Sam 7:10) or the crash of falling masonry (Isa 30:13) or prolonged exposure to blaring trumpets (Exod 19:16; Lev 25:9; 1 Chr 15:16, 28), to clashing cymbals (Ps 150:5), to a crowd shouting loudly (Ezra 3:13, 2 Chr 32:18, Ezek 8:18), or to both instruments and voices (2 Chr 15:14) might have significantly affected the hearing of those near the noises. The physiological reality behind such occasions of deafness could relate to damage to what Pettingell might call the “organs of hearing” or to the parts of the brain processing aural information, or to both, and might have been accompanied by other physical or psychological symptoms in any given individual.

Nor can one assume consistency and ongoing experience of deafness. Not all deafness is permanent, and some persons experience temporary, intermittent, or worsening effects. Equally, the degree of deafness can vary from the effects of tinnitus through mild hearing loss to profound deafness. Nor is all hearing loss bilateral; significant deafness in only one hemisphere or different degrees of loss on each side can cause specific symptoms. The social impact of any of these conditions would also have depended on factors such as the degree to which one’s life was dominated by noisy crowd scenes, quiet one-to-one conversations, interior- or exterior-specific contexts, or, as we shall see shortly, one’s gender.

In view of the multiple experiences of deafness possible in ancient Israel, Olyan’s suggestion that Hebrew terminology for “deafness” and “muteness” refers to two discrete examples of “somatic disability” must be regarded as deeply problematic. The Hebrew terminology in use—or at least what is available to us—is too unrefined to do justice to the complex and multiple social realities of hearing loss; Israelites affected by hearing loss might have scraped by to survive, might have lived comfortably, or might even have thrived.

#### IV. LIFE SETTINGS

If we are to develop some useful and illuminating information about the experiences of people affected by these forms of deafness, we need to move beyond Olyan’s discussion of the terminology and into the realms of what was physically, sociologically, and culturally possible. For reasons of space, we will not consider those who lost hearing late in life but rather will concentrate on those who were born deaf or who lost their hearing before acquiring a spoken language (Pettingell’s “deaf-mutes”).

Concerning so-called deaf-mutes, we begin with the two individuals described in Harlan Lane’s *The Mask of Benevolence* (1999).<sup>23</sup> “Deafie” (female)

<sup>23</sup>Harlan Lane, *The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community*, 2nd ed. (San Diego, CA: DawnSign, 1999), 147–50; the examples in this paragraph are from 147–49.

and “Vincent” (male) were born profoundly deaf to hearing families in rural Burundi, where no formal sign language existed. Their development may offer insight into the experiences of individual deaf-mutes in ancient Israel. Key to the experience of both Deafie and Vincent was their pursuit of visual communication. Both developed informal signs to communicate with hearing parents, siblings, and their extended families, but differences began to emerge. Deafie, regarded by her mother as simple and friendless, helped out with chores like cooking, sweeping, and fetching water. She was unable to marry but had had repeated abortions, being seen by some as an available sex partner. Vincent, in contrast, was regarded by his mother as a much underestimated entrepreneur, happily selling peanuts, fully aware of the value of money and with a reputation as a brawler. Similar gender differences—wholly absent from Olyan’s discussion of the Hebrew terminology—may well have marked, and further diversified, deaf experience in ancient Israel.

In describing family life in early Israel, Carol L. Meyers has suggested that each man or woman should be seen as existing within three concentric circles of kinship—the household (based on parents and siblings, plus others), the clan (which could have been of varied size [e.g., Gideon’s clan was the “weakest” in Manasseh; Judg 6:15]), and the tribe.<sup>24</sup> Meyers observed that “relatively few people had regular or even any contact with the processes of structures further up the [sociopolitical] pyramid”; for her, the household was, from the earliest period of Israel’s history and throughout the period of the monarchy, “the immediate and determinative social context for everyone, sustaining and shaping daily existence for its members. As the basic unit of both production and consumption, it was the single most important economic and social unit; it was also an integral part of Israelite political and religious structures.”<sup>25</sup> “The day-to-day dynamics of household life,” she points out, “were focused on subsistence activities, not on the policies and practices of the other levels of society.”<sup>26</sup> Almost all of the work done by men and women took place in and around the household, with specialized tasks such as metalworking conducted nearby.<sup>27</sup> The possibility of professionalization in areas such as prostitution, “food-processing skills, knowledge of herbal substances, textile work, nursing, and positions in the religious realm” increased as Israelite society developed.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Carol L. Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 115. On the setting of individuals in early Israel, see Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 128. On their setting in First Temple Israel, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel,” in *Families in Ancient Israel*, by Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, and Carol Meyers, *Family, Religion, and Culture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 48–103, here 50. In the preface to her *Rediscovering Eve*, the revision of the 1988 book *Discovering Eve*, Meyers noted the ubiquity of the agrarian household throughout Israelite history (ix).

<sup>25</sup> Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, 103.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 125, 134.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 171–79.

For Meyers, the household had three main components: a material one, a human one, and a performative one.<sup>29</sup> On the basis of archaeological evidence she envisages the typical Israelite household as a complex one in which several “conjugal pairs” with assorted others might live in separate physical dwellings (e.g., “four-roomed houses”) arranged around a common courtyard, with associated “installations” (e.g., cistern, oven) and “artifacts,” “lands” (near and far, level and terraced), and various “animals.” A household might have contained not only conjugal pairs and their relations (e.g., grandparents/aunts/uncles, brothers/sisters, sons/daughters/nieces/nephews) but also, in some “well-to-do” households, captives, servants, and sojourners.<sup>30</sup> In her earlier volume, Meyers suggested that the household was likely to be twelve to fourteen individuals in total.<sup>31</sup> A household could be rendered unstable by events such as death, disease, or divorce. In performative terms, sustaining the life of the household was the dominant driver for all work activity, with some tasks allotted to men (e.g., digging cisterns, clearing land, and building terraces), some to women (e.g., food preparation, education), and others shared as technical skill and necessity required (e.g., crafts, animal husbandry, horticulture). Younger members of the household would have contributed from an early age.<sup>32</sup> Everyone would have been working hard!

The woman born deaf into such a household would have had a relatively safe place in which to live out her existence, helping with household activities—grinding grain, butchery, baking, cooking, brewing and wine making, spinning yarn, dying and making clothes, creating pots, cleaning—and thereby gaining status within the household.<sup>33</sup> Excursions outside the home would have been either essential—collecting water<sup>34</sup> or twigs/dung for cooking, helping with the harvest,<sup>35</sup> defecation and urination<sup>36</sup>—or merely possible—purchasing food perhaps. If such a woman was considered unmarriageable because of her deafness, she could still have had sexual experiences, as was the case with Deafie, and even have borne a

<sup>29</sup>The discussion of the household in this paragraph is drawn from Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, 104–11.

<sup>30</sup>Blenkinsopp offers the following list of possible (First Temple) household inhabitants: “grandparents, the families of grown children, an adopted child or adopted children, a divorced adult daughter who had returned to the paternal homestead, male and female servants or slaves, and other dependents” (“Family in First Temple Israel,” 52).

<sup>31</sup>Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 136.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 148. On the role of gender in household religion, see Susan Ackerman, “Household Religion, Family Religion, and Women’s Religion in Ancient Israel,” in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity: Contextual and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan, *Ancient World—Comparative Histories* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 127–58.

<sup>33</sup>See, e.g., Jennie R. Ebeling, *Women’s Lives in Biblical Times* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 48–67; see also Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, 127–35; and Dever, *Lives of Ordinary People*, 164–65.

<sup>34</sup>According to Dever, young girls would have gone back and forth for part of the day, filling large store jars in the house (*Lives of Ordinary People*, 164).

<sup>35</sup>Ebeling, *Women’s Lives*, 35–36.

<sup>36</sup>Dever, *Lives of Ordinary People*, 185; Ebeling, *Women’s Lives*, 61.

child, either hearing or deaf. Should the household collapse completely through disease or death, a deaf woman would have arguably been little worse off than any of the other rootless women left to eke out a difficult existence on the margins of Israelite society.<sup>37</sup> Prostitution, as Meyers notes, the professional position for women mentioned most often in the Hebrew Bible, was a possibility.<sup>38</sup>

For an Israelite man born deaf, much would have depended on his context, whether in a household in a rural village or in a walled city, and on his family's social status. In a small village, perhaps situated around a familial connection, a broad back and a willingness to emulate the visual cues given by his relatives would allow him to work as a horticultural laborer, growing and harvesting crops such as wheat, grapes, and olives for subsistence or trade.<sup>39</sup> Caring for sheep, goats, or cattle in the fields might have been more difficult given the need to hear wild animal attacks at night. In a larger village of one to two hundred people<sup>40</sup> formed of several families, however, working with hearing others could have allowed such a role for a deaf man. Emulation would also have allowed the deaf man to work with his hands in cistern digging, building construction, and property maintenance or in skilled crafts such as metallurgy, jewelry making, or bone carving.<sup>41</sup> Israel's emphasis on monumental works and the taxation that such works required in later periods suggests a greater intrusion of the higher levels of the sociopolitical pyramid into household life, creating additional opportunities for activities outside the communal space. Depending on a man's skills, context, and luck, he may even have been able to survive the loss of his family. Dealing with any legal issues that arose without family support, however, would have been nearly impossible.

The legal traditions recorded in the Israelite Scriptures imply the free movement of individuals of both genders outside the household in all periods. In Deut 22:23–29, the woman and man in the cases cited are culpable because of sexual activity; they are not castigated for being out in the city or in the field. Similarly, among the laws collected in Exod 21–23, the need to legislate for injuries caused to the pregnant woman by two men fighting (21:22) or for those caused to a man or woman by an uncontrolled ox (21:28–32) assumes ongoing activities outside the household by both sexes. In Gen 34:1, Dinah goes out to visit the women of the

<sup>37</sup> On the place of the widow at the fringe of society, see, e.g., see Paula S. Hiebert, "Whence Shall Help Come to Me? The Biblical Widow," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 125–41, here 130.

<sup>38</sup> Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, 171. This does not seem to be a possibility for the women described by Ebeling, however, although the word *prostitute* does appear in her book (*Women's Lives*, 27, 31, 85, 133, 134).

<sup>39</sup> Dever, *Lives of Ordinary People*, 170–71; cf., e.g., Nathan McDonald, *What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat? Diet in Biblical Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Dever, *Lives of Ordinary People*, 158.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 179–80.

region without censure.<sup>42</sup> There is no reason to assume that deaf men or women would have been more restricted than their hearing counterparts.

Some limitations and the possibility of stigma were undoubtedly the lot of Pettingell's "deaf-mute" in ancient Israel, regardless of gender. Olyan's suggestions of "failure," "inadequacy," and "ignorance" based on notions of "weakness, vulnerability, and dependence"<sup>43</sup> probably had a basis in the life experience of all Israelites who were deaf in some form, but especially perhaps those who were deaf from birth or infancy. We should not assume, however, that deaf persons had no positive route through life. The opposite seems more likely.

## V. DEUTERONOMISTIC AUDIOCENTRICITY AND ITS IMPACT

What of those "deaf-mutes" who were born into a different social context? According to Olyan, Lev 21:17–23 suggests that there were no restrictions on the cultic activities of "deaf or mute priests" in at least one Israelite sacrificial system.<sup>44</sup> Given our previous discussion about the multiplicities of deaf experience, however, we should ask whether this rule, were it to be set within a Deuteronomistic setting, could have included boys who were born into priestly families and who were deaf from birth, or deaf from infancy, without speech. According to Avalos, the Deuteronomistic History privileges the auditory over the visual in regard to knowledge of God and of the world.<sup>45</sup> Late-onset deafness would not have affected the knowledge base of an experienced priest, but how might the deaf man envisaged above have coped in the Deuteronomistic context? Could he have acted as a priest? What duties would he have been able to carry out? How would his knowledge of God and the world have been affected by his deafness?

In Deuteronomy, the priests, the sons of Levi (21:5), are described as having care of the law (17:18) and as being charged with carrying the ark of the covenant (10:8–9; cf. 18:1–8). Their role often involved verbal communications to non-priests: they rendered judgments (17:8–9, 21:5), addressed troops (20:2), pronounced blessings (21:5), instructed (24:8), heard declarations when receiving tithes (26:3), and recited liturgical prayers to all Israel (27:14). In addition, in Joshua–2 Kings, they played musical instruments (Josh 6:6–16) and anointed and acclaimed individuals (1 Kgs 1:39). In contrast to the active involvement of priests in such activities, the sacrificial system described in both Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History involved laypeople slaughtering their own animals at the

<sup>42</sup> See, e.g., Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, WBC 6B (Nashville: Nelson, 2002), 518; Christensen never states that the woman is guilty for being outside the household (521–22).

<sup>43</sup> Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 48–53.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 48; on priestly bodily norms in Leviticus, see Raphael, *Biblical Corpora*, 31–39.

<sup>45</sup> Avalos, *Introducing Sensory Criticism*, 47–55.



altar tended by the priests.<sup>46</sup> The priests' role in *sacrifice* in the Deuteronomistic cult was thus largely a peripheral one.<sup>47</sup>

While there is no explicit prohibition in Deuteronomy against a deaf man approaching the altar, the verbal skills required might have put the priestly role beyond the capabilities of a man born deaf or deaf from infancy, without speech. This position, however, assumes that the deaf son operated on his own, and it ignores the relational setting in which he may have existed. One cultic role for a deaf son within a priestly family may perhaps be seen in the story of Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam 1–2, a text discussed by Avalos). Although the text does not state that the two sons are deaf, it says that they would not listen to Eli's voice (2:23–25). Their supporting role in the Shiloh cult suggests that a son born deaf or deaf from infancy, without speech, could have taken a role within the cult—one allowed/encouraged by the apparent lack of a prohibition against entering the sanctuary—so long as someone within the priestly family was able to hear and to speak. The prohibition against sacrificing animals away from “the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there” (Deut 12:5; cf. 12:6, 11; 15:22–23) points to the existence of either a single sanctuary or perhaps a small number of sanctuaries. The fewer the sanctuaries, the greater the concentration of priests and the greater the likelihood that a deaf priest could have found a useful role. Deuteronomy 26:3–4 describes the priest who “hears” the words of the supplicant and then “takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God.” How difficult would it have been for a deaf priest to perform such a ritual act?

What of the knowledge of God and of the world of a priest born deaf or one deafened in infancy and without speech? Avalos's argument that hearing is essential for acquiring such knowledge in the society behind the Deuteronomistic History neglects the symbolic knowledge about the deity and the world that is embodied in the numerous rites and acts that made up Israel's communal life. His emphasis on the Shema (Deut 6:4–5) as a recited and heard set of words, for example, does not take into account the complex multisensory rendering of Israel's act of remembrance of the nature of its God as it is described in Deut 6:6–8:

Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand,

<sup>46</sup>See, e.g., Deut 12:7, 12, 18, 27; 15:19–21; 16:2–7; 17:1; 18:3; Josh 8:31; Judg 20:26; 21:4; 1 Sam 1:3, 25; 11:15; 16:2–5; 2 Sam 15:12; 1 Kgs 1:9, 19; 3:3; 8:62–64; 2 Kgs 17:35–36.

<sup>47</sup>On nonsacrificing priests, see, e.g., Richard D. Nelson, *Raising up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 9, 59; see also Nelson, “The Role of the Priesthood in the Deuteronomistic History,” in *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989*, ed. John A. Emerton, VTSup 43 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 132–47; and J. Gordon McConville, “Priesthood in Joshua to Kings,” VT 49 (1999): 73–87.



fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

That the visual symbolic elements of such acts would have conveyed meaning about the deity to the deaf Israelite onlooker or participant can hardly be doubted. Viewing or participating in the acts of sacrifice in the Deuteronomistic cult would have provided priests and supplicants with a complex appreciation for the event, made up of the sensorial experience of the offering—the smell, taste, and touch of the blood and the flesh—and, if heard, of the verbal instructions and/or explanations involved. Explicit explanations of sacrificial systems are notably sparse in the ancient Near East, and it is at least arguable that sight—and perhaps also smell, taste, and touch<sup>48</sup>—would have been of greater significance to participants in the Deuteronomistic cult than the words spoken. Thus, *pace* Avalos, a deaf priest might have been able to gain a significant degree of knowledge about Israel's deity in the Deuteronomistic cult.<sup>49</sup>

## VI. DEAF SPACES IN ANCIENT ISRAEL?

Thus far we have focused on individual experiences of hearing loss. In this section we propose that some of those born deaf in ancient Israel may have experienced deafness as part of a signing “Deaf community.” The key to such

<sup>48</sup>The importance of the sense of smell for sacrificial efficacy is emphasized in Gen 8:21: “And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.’” That the rejection of the aroma is indicative of the rejection of the sacrifice can be seen in the deity's words about punishment for disobedience in Lev 26:31: “I will lay your cities waste, will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing odors.” In discussing Egyptian sacrifices, David Frankfurter also notes the importance of the sense of smell: “A third context, somewhat closer to the popular conception of sacrifice, is the ritual incineration of certain animals. These rites were meant in one capacity to please the gods with the aroma of barbecue, but also, more importantly, to ward off chaos through the ritual destruction of cosmic enemies. The animal carcasses are presented as images or incarnations ... of divine enemies, and the grilling process is declared to be the vanquishing of those enemies.... The rite ... revolves around burning and aroma, not killing or blood” (“Egyptian Religion and the Problem of the Category ‘Sacrifice,’” in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, ed. Jennifer Wright Knust and Zsuzsanna Várhelyi [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 75–94, here 78–80).

<sup>49</sup>In considering such a situation, the 1881 account by M. Ballard of his deaf life pre-education and its relation to the sacred is worth reading (“Reflections of a Deaf-Mute before Education,” *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb*, 26 [1881]: 31–39; reprinted in *American Annals of the Deaf* 142 [1997]: 24–26). Interest in the thought processes of the “deaf-mute” without a formal sign language was common in the period (see, e.g., W. Wilkinson, “Conscience in the Uneducated Deaf-Mute,” *American Annals of the Deaf* 25 [1880]: 45–49; P. Denys, “Primitive Conscience among Deaf-Mutes,” *American Annals of the Deaf* 25 [1880]: 50–53).

communities is, as Lane's Deafie and Vincent suggest, the readiness of deaf people to develop visual communication through gesture. The opportunity to develop that system from gesture into one of the world's multitude of natural sign languages depends only on a combination of numbers and proximity.<sup>50</sup>

Although we have no knowledge of the incidence of deafness in ancient Israel, in the modern West approximately one person in a thousand is either born deaf or develops profound deafness before acquiring spoken language. Pettingell concluded his nineteenth-century study with the claim that the number of those who became deaf in infancy—his “semi-mutes”—would have been fewer in the ancient world because some of the relevant diseases are of comparatively recent origin, thus lowering the number of those in this category of deafness.<sup>51</sup> At such a low rate of occurrence, contact between deaf persons could be expected to occur spontaneously only in the very largest cities or to develop only in situations where deaf people were purposefully gathered (a type of action for which no evidence exists in the case of ancient Israel).<sup>52</sup> At other times in the modern era, and in other places around the globe, however, rates of congenital or early-onset deafness have been much higher. For example, among the Al-Sayed bedouin of the present-day Negev, one in twenty is born deaf (150 persons of a total of 3,000, or 5 percent). In Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, at one point in the eighteenth century, one in four was being born deaf (25 percent).<sup>53</sup> In individual families, the rate could be higher still. In a letter to the *Times* in 1875, the Rev. Samuel Smith, (hearing) chaplain at St Saviour's, Oxford Street, referred to a family of two married cousins with which he was familiar, eight of whose nine children were born deaf (89 percent).<sup>54</sup> Such

<sup>50</sup>Natural sign languages are full human language systems in which movement harnesses light (and sometimes touch), rather than sound, for communication. Emerging locally, their development as linguistic systems is attested as far back as ancient Greece and can, in some situations, like the spontaneous recent emergence of a unique Nicaraguan sign language, be extremely rapid (see Ann Senghas, “The Development of Nicaraguan Sign Language via the Language Acquisition Process,” in *Proceedings of the 19th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development*, ed. Dawn MacLaughlin and Susan McEwen, 2 vols. [Somerville: Cascadilla, 1995], 2:543–52). Their development from gesture to language usually coincides temporally with the emergence of a stable Deaf community providing opportunities for consistent and ongoing use of the language (Mike Gulliver, “DEAF Space, A History: Emergent, Autonomous, Collocated, Disabled” [PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 2009], 61–88).

<sup>51</sup>Pettingell, “What the Bible Says,” 238.

<sup>52</sup>In 1800, Paris had a population of between 500,000 and 700,000 and a long-standing Deaf community of over 200 adults (Gulliver, “DEAF Space,” 82–83). The most common settings for deaf collocation are residential schools. Other situations, however, do exist, for example, the long-standing deaf community created in the Ottoman court of the sixteenth century (see M. Miles, “Signing at the Seraglio: Mutes, Dwarfs and Jesters at the Ottoman Court, 1500–1700,” *Disability and Society* 15 [2000]: 115–34).

<sup>53</sup>Norah Ellen Groce, *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: A Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

<sup>54</sup>Rev. Samuel Smith, “Marriage of Cousins,” letter, *Times*, 19 February 1875, 7.

families can extend for many generations, transmitting sign language and, through that language, other cultural knowledge sometimes across hundreds of years.<sup>55</sup> One of the authors of this article knows of one such family that has now reached its tenth generation and can trace its history back over two centuries!

These examples of deaf communication and community suggest that isolation or exclusion need not have been the inevitable result of early-life deafness in ancient Israel. Given the right conditions, what would have prevented deaf people in that society from being a part of a vibrant, active, communicating, signing community? In deaf studies, a foundational critical assumption is that where numbers of deaf people come together with the time and freedom to develop sign languages, then Deaf spaces will inevitably come into being. It is this insight that we wish to introduce into biblical scholarship.<sup>56</sup> In the case of ancient Israel, our textual evidence is entirely lacking for what such Deaf spaces would have looked like. Such (an argument from) silence would normally be seen by biblical scholars as providing evidence only for the absence of such groups. Instead, we want to suggest that, if the conditions were right, Deaf spaces would occasionally have come into existence, even in an ancient culture that, in its literature, seems barely to have noticed deaf people at all.

<sup>55</sup>See also Harlan Lane, Richard C. Pillard, and Ulf Hedberg, *The People of the Eye, Deaf Ethnicity and Ancestry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Mary Beth Kitzel, "Chasing Ancestors: Searching for the Roots of American Sign Language in the Kentish Weald, 1620–1851" (PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2014; available at <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/48877>); and Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003).

<sup>56</sup>The nature of Deaf space(s) is still under discussion in anthropology, deaf studies, and geography, and various proposals have been developed. Marion Heap, Gill Valentine, and Tracey Skelton point to visual communication "bubbles" within a dominant hearing world (Marion Heap, "Sign-Deaf Spaces: The Deaf in Cape Town Creating Community, Crossing Boundaries, Constructing Identity," *Anthropology of Southern Africa* 29 [2006]: 35–44; Gill Valentine and Tracey Skelton, "Living on the Edge: The Marginalisation and 'Resistance' of D/deaf Youth," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 35 [2003]: 301–21). Annelies Kusters removes the inherent imbalance of these descriptions, focusing instead on the parity of hearing and Deaf communication, describing Deaf spaces simply as "how Deaf sociality is produced in space" (*Deaf Space in Adamorobe: An Ethnographic Study in a Village in Ghana* [Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2015] 22). Mike Gulliver goes further, arguing that if Deaf spaces share parity with hearing spaces, then Deaf spaces are effectively snapshots of "other worlds," alternative realities authored by Deaf people on a visual plane (Gulliver, "DEAF Space," 200). Constructions of Deaf spaces and their relationship to hearing world spaces and geographies are explored by a growing number of scholars, notably Gill Harold ("Reconsidering Sound and the City: Asserting the Right to the Deaf-Friendly City," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31 [2013]: 846–62), Mary Beth Kitzel ("Chasing Ancestors"), and Claire Shaw ("We Have No Need to Lock Ourselves Away': Space, Marginality, and the Negotiation of Deaf Identity in Late Soviet Moscow," *Slavic Review* 74 [2015]: 57–78). Their work, and that of others, is available through the resources page of the Deaf Geographies Sandbox (<http://www.deafgeographies.com>).

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